

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 226420

FOLLOWING REPEAT NEW DELHI 13611 ACTION SECSTATE 10 OCT

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 13611

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, IN

SUBJECT: CABINET RESHUFFLE

1. ON THE LATE EVENING OF OCTOBER 10 THE GOI OFFICIALLY ANNOUNCED THE RESULTS OF MRS. GANDHI'S LONG-EXPECTED CABINET RESHUFFLE. THE MAJOR CHANGES INVOLVED THE TRANSFER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER SWARAN SINGH TO DEFENSE; FINANCE MINISTER Y.B. CHAVAN TO EXTERNAL AFFAIRS; INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY MINISTER C. SUBRAMANIAM TO FINANCE; AND DEFENSE MINISTER JAGJIVAN RAM TO AGRICULTURE.

2. MRS. GANDHI'S CHANGES OF PORTFOLIOS AMONG HER "INNER CABINET" CARRY MORE ADMINISTRATIVE THAN POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE WITH THE MAJOR EMPHASIS ON CONTINUITY. THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE POWERFUL POLITICAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE OF THE CABINET (MRS. GANDHI, CHAVAN, RAM AND SINGH) REMAINS THE SAME. (ALL THREE OF HER COLLEAGUES HAVE HAD LONG CAREERS IN THE UNION CABINET. RAM WAS A MEMBER OF NEHRU'S INTERIM
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CABINET IN 1946. THOUGH TEMPORARILY "KAMARAJED" IN THE

EARLY 1960'S HE HAS HELD A PORTFOLIO EVERY YEAR SINCE INDEPENDENCE. SINGH HAS BEEN A MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS SINCE 1952; SUBRAMANIAM AND CHAVAN SINCE 1962.) BOTH SINGH AND RAM WILL BE RETURNING TO MINISTRIES THEY HAVE PREVIOUSLY HELD. FORMER HOME MINISTER DIKSHIT, A LONG-TIME ASSOCIATE OF THE NEHRU FAMILY AND A CLOSE AND TRUSTED ADVISOR OF MRS. GANDHI, WAS NAMED MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO.

3. THE NEW ASSIGNMENTS OF MRS. GANDHI'S SENIOR CABINET COLLEAGUES ALSO INDICATE THAT SHE IS INTERESTED IN IMPROVING ADMINISTRATIVE PERFORMANCE. RAM ENJOYS PROVEN ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERTISE AND DID AN EFFECTIVE JOB AS MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE FROM 1967-70, THE YEARS OF THE "GREEN REVOLUTION". HIS PERFORMANCE IS SURE TO CONTRAST SHARPLY WITH HIS WEAK AND AGING PREDECESSOR, F.A. AHMED, WHOM MRS. GANDHI KICKED UPSTAIRS TO THE PRESIDENCY EARLIER THIS YEAR. THE COMPETENT, HARD-WORKING SUBRAMANIAM SHOULD ALSO TURN IN A BETTER PERFORMANCE THAN HIS PREDECESSOR IN THE IMPORTANT FINANCE MINISTRY. SINGH'S TALENTS WILL BE FULLY UTILIZED IN THE COMPLEX MINISTRY OF DEFENCE.

4. CHAVAN IS WELL DISPOSED TO THE US AND SHOULD CONTINUE SINGH'S EFFORTS TOWARDS IMPROVING INDO-US RELATIONS.

5. WE WILL REPORT ON ADDITIONAL CHANGES AND PROVIDE FURTHER ANALYSIS OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MRS. GANDHI'S CABINET RESHUFFLE.
MOYNIHAN UNQUOTE INGERSOLL

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